

Belmont Energy Committee

November 16th, 2022

Opening

The regular meeting of the Belmont Energy Committee was called to order at 19 o'clock as a virtual meeting led by James Booth.

Present

- Claus C Becker – Scribe
- Marty Bitner
- James Booth - Chair
- Brian Kopperl
- John Kolterman
- Greg Piotrowicz
- Alex Thurston
- Roger Wrubel

Absent

Ellie Lesser, Ben Thivierge, Donald Mercier

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was approved as distributed.

Open Issues

1. Approval of October Minutes

Minutes were approved with minor changes. Alex Thurston abstained since he was not present at October meeting.

2. Research on Sustainability Coordinators in area towns (John Kolterman)

John K reported, based on interviews, that towns with sustainability coordinators have seen good returns (4 – 8 times fully loaded costs of position) on investment in the form of grants won. City of Beverly was used as example since it has mature processes. Salary for grant person is \$75k to \$110k year. Roger Wrubel shared a list of nine grants that Belmont could apply for. At least 24 MA towns have grant managers.

3. Belmont Housing Production Plan focus group – Dec. 7 (James Booth)

Housing Production Plans (HPPs) are a specific plan type defined under Massachusetts state law and regulated by the state's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). HPPs help communities understand their housing needs, set housing goals, and identify strategies to achieve them.

The Town of Belmont is partnering with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for Greater Boston, and Metro West Collaborative Development, to update the town's current Housing Production Plan (HPP) and launch a preliminary visioning process that will likely inform a future Comprehensive Plan.

Metro West Collaborative Development is hosting focus groups as part of the HPP public engagement process. These are opportunities to hear from residents whose housing needs we want to make sure to understand.

Link to December 7th at 19 o'clock zoom call.

4. EV busses: next steps (Roger Wrubel)

Committee recommends pursuing a ten year contract with a bus company which will require Town Meeting approval by law. The longer period of use is necessary to capture the savings from sharply lower operating costs of electric busses. Patrice Garvin, Town Administrator, recommended against a fall motion to allow ten-year contracts for EV busses so it might be put forth in the spring. Committee debated what share of electric busses would be optimal.

Roger Wrubel and Brian Kopperl provided an overview of how Belmont can transition to electric town vehicles in a recent article

<https://www.belmontcitizensforum.org/2022/10/27/how-belmont-can-switch-to-electric-vehicles>

5. Local example: Lincoln – solar on capped incinerator site (Brian Kopperl)

Incinerator site still not capped even though it has been waiting to get closed off for a decade during which time the town has missed out on revenue from site use (e.g. battery power arbitrage or solar power production). Committee agreed that this could be a good target for a grant application.

6. Coordination with Long-Term Capital Budget Committee

Claus Becker is the liaison to the newly renamed Comprehensive Capital Planning Committee.

7. Belmont Hill Parking Lot

Unclear where this project is. There is a petition to challenge school's plan for above ground gasoline station and 150 parking spots where five houses now stand. Dover amendment (Massachusetts General Law (MGL) Chapter 40A, Section 3) allows agricultural, religious, and educational institutions to ignore certain zoning restrictions.

8. Plastics Recycling

Brian Kopperl reported having read that only four percent of nation's consumption of plastic is recycled. No members of this committee knows what happens to waste collected in blue bins in Belmont.

9. Reports:

a. BMHS Solar (Brian Kopperl)

Three bids for rooftop solar received (780 to 1143 kW rated capacity). Solar PV expected to provide 25 to 32% of the school's annual energy need for energy (kWh) but could provide a larger share of the energy expense depending on the orientation of the panels.

b. MAPC presentation (James Booth)

Metropolitan Area Planning Council presentation to Select Board delayed to 2023.

c. Belmont Light (Ben Thivierge)

Ben Thivierge reported by email that a rate increase was voted through and will take effect by January first. Solar producers will see an increase in reimbursement for energy supplied.

d. Library Building Committee (Marty Bitner)

Town meeting will authorize borrowing of funds to construct the library. Building may be net-zero but there isn't enough room on site to physically generate the required energy so the rest will be purchased as SRECs

e. Hockey Rink building committee (Roger Wrubel)

Failed to secure town support but this committee looks forward to working with the building committee as they try for approval again.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 21 o'clock by James Booth. Next meeting to be December 14th at 19 o'clock.